

AN
EXAMINATION
OF THE
AGE OF REASON,

OR AN
INVESTIGATION OF TRUE AND FABULOUS THEOLOGY,
BY THOMAS PAINE:

BY GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B. A.
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Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
Quo me cunque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.

HOR.

A little Learning is a dangerous Thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring.
There shallow Draughts intoxicate the Brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again. POPE.

L O N D O N:
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1794.



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TO THE FRIENDS
OF RELIGION,
REFORMATION,
AND UNIVERSAL PEACE,
OF EVERY DENOMINATION;
AND PARTICULARLY
TO THE SOCIETIES
OF GREAT-BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
ASSOCIATED
FOR THESE GOD-LIKE PURPOSES;
THIS DEFENCE
OF THE
RELIGION OF JESUS
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEVOTED
BY THE AUTHOR.

8/63



E R R A T A.

Page 27, line 11th, for *one* right *angle*, read *two* right
angles.

— 28, line 9th, for *son* of righteoufness, read *fun* of
righteoufness.

N. B. The references are made to the first edition of
Mr. Paine's book.

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AN
EXAMINATION
OF THE
AGE OF REASON, &c.

THAT the former writings of *Thomas Paine* abound with indications of original conception and profound thought, of comprehension and sagacity, far beyond the vigour of vulgar minds, no man, I presume, of character for intelligence and integrity will venture to deny. To the authority of venal sycophants, and all the retainers of corrupt and wicked systems, whether in *politics* or *religion*, no competency can be allowed in a decision upon this subject : but, on the contrary, the virulence of their abuse is in itself no unequivocal symptom of extraordinary merit : just as the screams and tumult of the feathered tribe prove some bird of nobler presence and more ample pinion to be approaching. The work, which I have undertaken to examine, is entitled to particular respect from the circumstances of it's composition.

It is the effusion of a pregnant intellect, sobered by the meditations of a solitary prison, not unattended probably by some apprehensions of such a catastrophe, as a crisis of things so novel and eventful, may daily and hourly be expected to produce. The reflections therefore of such a season, from so popular a name, on a subject of such universal interest, is secure, we may presume, of considerable attention in this country, from those who are occupied in the discussion of their *civil* and *religious creed*: a number, which has certainly increased of late with surprising rapidity, and will, I hope and believe, go on encreasing with an accelerated progress. On this account, I conceived myself not unlikely to serve the cause of revealed truth by an examination of a deistical pamphlet, which seemed so fair a candidate for extensive circulation: and I felt the more inclination to this task, not from an arrogant persuasion of superior knowledge and abilities, but from a clear conviction, that *Christianity* cannot be vindicated adequately and consistently against *Deism*, by any slave of *systems*, and *establishments*; well aware in the mean time, that all my zeal for *Christianity* will not screen me from the malice of those, who love *church-emoluments* better than *scripture-truth*; because an opportunity will arise of exposing the trumpery and nonsense of *ecclesiastics*.

The



The time is come, when all our opinions must be tried at the touchstone of severe enquiry : and, if the *Jewish* and *Christian* Revelations cannot support themselves against the batteries of their assailants, in the estimation of capable and disinterested judges, the out-posts must be abandoned ; and a retreat secured to the fortresses of *deism*, already occupied by the patriarchs of old, and the illustrious philosophers of later times. The sway of *creeds* and *councils*, of *hierarchies* and *churches*, whether *Protestant* or *Popish*, over the bodies and consciences of men, is diminishing apace : and the temple of revelation, deprived of the mouldering props, which priestcraft, and tyranny, and superstition had framed for it's support, must repose solely on it's proper basis, the adamant of TRUTH.

After premising a short introduction, explanatory of his motives to this work, our ingenuous author delivers his creed :

“ I believe in one God, and no more ; and I
“ hope for happiness beyond this life.”

I join the writer in assent to these articles of faith. That *Creed* of *Christian Churches*, which acknowledges *Jesus Christ* also to be *God*, and the *Holy Spirit* to be *God*, is a fundamental violation
of

of all theology; a doctrine, alike unknown to the *Heathens* and the *Jews*, and contemplated with abhorrence by the followers of *Moses* from it's first propagation to this very day: a doctrine, inconsistent with the plainest declarations of *Christ* himself and his apostles; a doctrine, which no human testimony whatever could render credible; a doctrine, which will happily prove a mill-stone of destruction to all *political* establishments of *christianity*.

Our author thus proceeds in his confession:
 " I believe the equality of man, and I believe
 " that religious duties consist in doing justice,
 " loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our
 " fellow-creatures happy."

All diversity of *civil privileges* and *titular distinctions*; all inequality, but the transient and casual inequality produced by personal exertion, public benefit, or private worth, is destitute of even the shadow of support from nature or revelation. We are all children of one common father: and *Jesus of Nazareth* allowed no pre-eminence among his disciples, but that of mutual subjection, condescending service, profound humility, and self-abasement*; of which lowly virtues he pro-

* Matthew, xx. 25—29. Romans, xii. 2. Ephesians, v. 21.
 2 Peter, v. 5.

posed himself as a complete example. It requires but a trivial portion of sagacity to discover, that certain orders and descriptions of frail creatures, encompassed with every inducement to be corrupt *themselves*, and plentifully furnished with every means of corrupting *others*, cannot be peculiarly calculated to promote the general happiness of mankind; and this happiness we are compelled to regard as the prime object of the divine administration. It was a beautiful sentiment of Plato*, that "the affairs of states would never be well conducted, 'till philosophers were kings, or kings philosophers." He, who vindicates corruption in society, and discountenances a progress to all perfection, of which humanity is capable, from the stale topic of the inevitable depravity of human beings, discourages every effort for virtuous pre-eminence, degrades the dignity of our nature, libels his species, and thwarts the measures of divine government. *Christians* at least might be expected to bestow some readiness in their attempts of conforming to the injunctions of their divine teachers, by striving to be *perfect* †, and *thoroughly furnished unto all good works* by "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and going on unto *perfection*‡." In our present state of embarrassment and degradation from a thousand

* Dial. v. de Republicâ.—† Philippians, iii. 12. 2 Tim. iii. 17.

‡ Hebrews, vi. 1.

causes,

causes, it were presumptuous ignorance, bordering on profaneness, to prescribe a limit to the capacities of mortality, either in moral or intellectual exertion. He at least cannot be deemed *unfriendly* to his species, or contemptuous to the divinity, who thinks respectably of the workmanship of God, of the rational image of his Creator.

Again: " I do not believe in the creed professed
 " by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by
 " the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by
 " the Protestant church, nor by any church that
 " I know of. My own mind is my own church."

This too may be conceded, if by " the creed
 " of the Protestant church," be meant that monstrous farrago of absurdities and contradictions, concentrated with most ingenious and comprehensive brevity, in the *creeds* denominated the *Athanasian* and *Nicene*; which, without the expedient of repeating backwards, would

—— " with a vengeance send,

" From Media post to Egypt*"

a much more untractable dæmon than Asmodeus†:
 or, if some clauses even of the *Apostle's creed* were intended by our author; clauses, which may be

* Paradise Lost, iv. 170.

† The creed of the holy *Bishop Athanasius*, till I am better informed, is of too hard a digestion for my charity. *Dryden's* preface to his *Religio Laici*.

found indeed in the *liturgies* of *established churches*, but are certainly not “ written in the book of life.”

“ All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.”

A just remark, concisely and pregnantly expressed. *National churches* are that *hay and stubble** which might be removed without difficulty or confusion, from the fabric of religion, by the gentle hand of reformation, but which the infatuation of *ecclesiastics* will leave to be destroyed by *fire*†. *National churches* are that incrustation, which has enveloped, by gradual concretion, the diamond of *christianity*; nor can, I fear, the genuine lustre be restored, but by such violent efforts as the separation of substances so long and closely connected must inevitably require.

Nor can I forbear the quotation of another paragraph, replete with manly sense and dignified morality, conveyed in simple but energetic language;

* 1 Corinthians, iii. 12. † verse, 13.

though not immediately pertinent to the discussion, which I have in view; especially as fewer occasions of approbation and coincidence will be presented in our progress through the pamphlet.

“ It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, “ if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as “ to subscribe his professional belief to things he “ does not believe, he has prepared himself for the “ commission of every other crime. He takes up “ the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in “ order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he begins “ with a perjury. Can we conceive any thing “ more destructive to morality than this?”

These very rational and important observations are applicable in the fullest latitude to the *subscriptions* exacted from young men at our *Universities* for *degrees*, and for the candidates for the ministry in the *Church of England*. It is a most shocking reflection to every lover of truth and honesty, that a requisition to acknowledge a multitudinous mass of *theological* and *political* propositions, denominated *articles of religion*, which many have never read, and which they, who read, cannot understand; that an assent, I say, to such a monstrous and

and unintelligible hodge podge of scholastic reveries should be made an indispensable condition to the privilege of preaching the *truths* of *Christianity*. The simplicity and sincerity of the gospel cannot fail of furtherance and support, beyond all controversy, from those, who begin their godly functions in such trifling with veracity and the solemnity of oaths ! who thus bind themselves to the belief of certain tenets manufactured and imposed by others ; and thereby preclude themselves (in addition to the indirect impediment in the way of acquiring truth, interposed by this unequivocal declaration of indifference to her interests) from pursuing their theological enquiries beyond the limits assigned by *councils* and *parliaments* in former days, by an express obligation not to exceed the knowledge of their forefathers, nor to dispute their opinions, whether true or false. I cannot myself conceive a case more palpably immoral and indefensible : nor can we be surprised at a plenteous harvest of *unbelievers* in a vineyard cultivated by labourers of this complexion.

“ Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from
 “ God communicated to certain individuals. The
 “ Jews have their Moses; the Christians their Jesus
 “ Christ, their apostles and saints; and the Turks
 C “ their

“ their Mahomet ; as if the way to God was not
 “ open to every man alike.”

This statement is frivolous and erroneous in the extreme. The system of *Jesus Christ* proceeds upon the very supposition here instituted, that “ the way to God is open to every man alike ;” as might be proved by many passages in the *Christian* Scriptures. What the *Jews* and *Christians* maintain in behalf of their respective systems, is : that their founders delivered to mankind rational sentiments of the Divine nature, of his existence, and his providential government of the world, at a time, when ignorance and depravation, with respect to these fundamental canons of religious rectitude, were almost universally predominant. With relation to the writings of the *Jews*, it is altogether undeniable, and is a truth of the utmost weight and magnitude, that our accumulated discoveries in science and philosophy, and all our progress in other parts of knowledge, has not enabled the wisest of the moderns to excel the noble sentiments conveyed in the didactics and devotional compositions of the *Old Testament* ; compositions, many of which existed, without dispute, before the earliest writings of heathen antiquity, and at a period, when even those illustrious instructors of mankind, the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were
 bar-

barbarous and unknown. It would gratify me much, I confess, to be informed in what manner the contemners of the *Jews* and of the *Mosaic* system account for this singular *phænomenon* : which indeed might be stated with abundantly more fullness and cogency, if it were necessary on this occasion. Will *Thomas Paine* the *deist*, or any of our modern *atheists*, undertake the solution of this difficulty ?—Besides, let any man compare the simple morality and the noble precepts of the Gospel, as they relate to the attributes of God and the duties of humanity, with the monstrous theology, with the subtleties and the contradictory schemes of contemporary moralists, among the *Greeks* and *Romans* ; (who nevertheless had, in all probability, profited mediately or immediately by the *Jewish* system, which could not exist without diffusing some influence through the neighbourhood) and reflect at the same time, that a perfect manual of morality may be collected from a few pages in the gospel, but must be picked in *Pagan* writers from a multitude of discordant volumes, and a mass of incoherency and absurdity : and then condescend to furnish us with an explanation of what must be allowed on all hands a surprising fact ; namely, the existence of such superior intelligence in a *Jewish* carpenter at *Nazareth*. So then, though we concede to *Mr Paine*, that “the way to God was open

to every man alike," we affirm of the *Jewish* and *Christian* dispensations, that *they* only were *this way* to any man desirous of entertaining rational notions of God and human duty. Without the illumination, which has been distributed through the world from these dispensations, *Thomas Paine*, and other *deists* of our own and succeeding ages, who fancy themselves so very philosophical and intelligent in their theology, would have known full as little of the matter, to speak with moderation, as much wiser heads than their's, among the illustrious nations of antiquity, deprived of these advantages, so much contemned and so ungratefully enjoyed. The natural inference from these indubitable positions is clearly, *some* degree of supernatural communication, which we stile *Revelation*, to the founders of *Judaism* and *Christianity*, *Moses* and *Jesus*; and the denial of such communication leaves a problem, I apprehend, of much more arduous solution; but which we may now expect the wonderful disciples of modern reason to explain in a way, that will leave no further difficulties on the subject.

" As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words,
 " I will, before I proceed further into the subject,
 " offer some observations on the word *revelation*.
 " Revelation, when applied to religion, means
 " some-

“ something communicated *immediately* from God
 “ to man.

“ No one will deny or dispute the power of the
 “ Almighty to make such a communication if he
 “ pleases. But admitting for the sake of a case,
 “ that something has been revealed to a certain
 “ person, and not revealed to any other person, it
 “ is revelation to that person only. When he
 “ tells it to a second person, a second to a third,
 “ a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a
 “ revelation to all those persons. It is revelation
 “ to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every
 “ other; and consequently, they are not obliged
 “ to believe it.”

This statement also is inaccurate, fallacious, and inconclusive. Let us see, if we can exhibit a rational and unexceptionable representation of the point in question. A revelation is made to one person in the first instance; *Moses*, for example. He communicates this revelation to a *second* party, his countrymen, the children of *Israel*. But does he expect them to believe this message on a mere assertion, so that their assent may be stiled a *hearsay* revelation? No such thing. He delivers his credentials with the message, and sanctions his pretensions by some display of super-

supernatural agency. Whether such display were in reality made in the case before us, is not now the question : I am only exhibiting the proposition in it's proper form, and stating the fact, as it exists, whether authentically or otherwise, in the *Mosaic* history : and hence, I think, it is abundantly manifest, that *Mr Paine's* notions of the character and condition of the *Jewish* and *Christian* revelations are so confused, as to render his account altogether unsuitable to the purpose in view, and most effectually impertinent. And this answer, I apprehend, will serve for all contained in the succeeding paragraphs, which are also wholly foreign to the subject ; a mere inapplicable figment of our author's bewildered imagination.

“ It is a contradiction in terms and ideas to call
 “ any thing a revelation that comes to us at second
 “ hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is
 “ necessarily limited to the first communication.
 “ After this it is only an account of something which
 “ that person says was a revelation made to him ;
 “ and though he may find himself obliged to believe
 “ it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in
 “ the same manner ; for it was not a revelation made
 “ to *me*, and I have only his word for it that it was
 “ made to *him*.

“ When

“ When Moses told the children of Israel that he
 “ received the two tables of the commandments from
 “ the hand of God, they were not obliged to believe
 “ him, because they had no other authority for it
 “ than his telling them so; and I have no other au-
 “ thority for it than some historian telling me so :
 “ the commandments carrying no internal evi-
 “ dence of divinity with them. They contain some
 “ good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to
 “ be a law-giver or a legislator could produce him-
 “ self, without having recourse to supernatural in-
 “ tervention.”

In a note our author subjoins a sarcastical re-
 flection, with which his fancy seems not a little
 tickled; and he proposes it accordingly with an
 air of self-complacency and exultation.

“ It is, however, necessary to except the de-
 “ claration, which says, that God *visits the sins of*
 “ *the fathers upon the children.* It is contrary to
 “ every principle of moral justice.”

But nothing in reality can possibly be more
 feeble and inefficient than this objection. The
 belief and worship of one true God, in oppo-
 sition to a plurality of divinities and the vani-
 ties of idolatry, is the root of all genuine reli-
 gion; and springs up into that stem, upon which

every moral and social duty must be engrafted. Now, it is most notorious, mankind are so entirely the creatures of imitation, association, and habit, that a general prevalence of a false principle in one age has an obvious and unavoidable tendency to transmit this principle, with accumulated error and aggravation, to the age immediately succeeding*. But history and experience uniformly ascertain, that, while individuals go unpunished, large societies and communities of men at least (and to the *Jews* in their national capacity were these commandments given) are, in the regular course of divine administration, chastised for their crimes, in consequence of the eternal alliance and inseparable connection between vice and suffering: yet these crimes are not their own crimes merely, but the aggregate wickedness of *themselves* and their *progenitors*. And with unfeigned sorrow do I regret, that *Thomas Paine* should himself be a standing evidence of this immutable dispensation; whilst he lies languishing in prison for an accidental attachment to the *Brissotine* faction, without

* So *Horace*, Ode iii. 6. 4. 6.

*Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores; mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosorem.*

one personal or political immorality to justify so harsh a treatment*.

Our author proceeds: " When also I am told
 " that a woman, called the Virgin Mary, said, or
 " gave out, that she was with child without any
 " cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed
 " husband, Joseph, said, that an angel told him
 " so, I have a right to believe them or not: such
 " a circumstance required a much stronger evi-
 " dence than their bare word for it: but we have
 " not even this; for neither Joseph nor Mary
 " wrote any such matter themselves. It is only
 " reported by others that *they said so*. It is hearsay
 " upon hearsay, and I do not chuse to rest my be-
 " lief upon such evidence.

These difficulties I concede to the *deist*, for my own part, in all their force; they are pertinent in themselves, and of serious significance to those whom they may concern: but as the immaculate conception of *Jesus* by the *Holy Spirit* constitutes no *essential* article of *my* creed, and certainly rests

* This doctrine "of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children" was seen and acknowledged by the *heathen* moralists. So *Horace*, *Od.* iii. 8. 1.

Delicta majorum immeritus lues,
 Romane donec templa refeceris
 Ædesque labentes deorum et
 Fœda nigro simulachra fumo.

on much weaker evidence, than any other important fact of all the gospels, I leave the vindication of it to the orthodox sons of the establishment. In the mean time, as one defect of demonstration* has not impaired the general truth of the *Newtonian philosophy*, not even in the case of that particular doctrine, the propagation of *sounds*, so an occasional interpolation of one or two groundless circumstances will not invalidate the evidences of *Christianity*: they repose on a much broader and firmer basis than that of detached facts, knavish impositions on the superstitious, and unnecessary miracles. For the same reason, I shall not scruple to pass unnoticed the subsequent paragraphs of our antagonist, which direct their attacks on the wretched materials heaped up, for the security of usurped dominion and secular interest, by the hands of *priests* and *devotees*: a tribe of *Christians*, holden by *Mr Paine* and myself in equal veneration.

“ Nothing that is here said can apply, even with
 “ the most distant disrespect, to the *real* character
 “ of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and
 “ practised was of the most benevolent kind; and

* *Mathemat. Princip. Philos. Nat. lib. ii. prop. 47.*

“ though

“ though similar systems of morality had been
 “ preached by Confucius, and by some of the
 “ Greek philosophers, many years before ; by the
 “ Quakers since, and by many good men in all
 “ ages ; it has not been exceeded by any.”

Of these remarks the former part is excellent : the latter was never surpassed in ignorance and absurdity. The *Quakers* undoubtedly, take them all in all, are, as a PRACTICAL society, the most respectable of all the religious sects that have come to my knowledge : but what can be more supremely ridiculous, than to exemplify their morality in contradistinction to that of the *gospel* ; when they are one and the same ? To say, moreover, of the *Christian* system merely, that “ it has not been exceeded by any” systems ancient or modern, is such a misconception, as candour will choose to impute, not to malignant disparagement, but to an ignorance rather of the philosophical systems of antiquity, and the comparative merits of evangelical morality ; which, I fear, *Mr Paine* has not examined with a minuteness and scrupulosity, that will authorise to a conscientious reasoner such peremptory decision on the case.

I wish those heavenly maxims of *Solon* and the son of *Sirach*, *Know thyself* :—and, *Understand first*

and then rebuke; were more deeply impressed on the hearts and memories of us all: that we might not impose upon ourselves conceit for knowledge; upon our readers, sophistry for argument, and dogmatism for intelligent conviction.

We are now arrived at the most important parts, in my judgement, of our author's production; to which I shall endeavour to reply directly, intelligibly, and without evasion: and, if I should prove unable to vindicate my faith in *Christianity* upon principles truly rational and unambiguously explicit, I will relinquish it altogether, and look for an asylum in the *deism* of *Thomas Paine*, and the *calm philosophy* of *Hume*.

“ Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of
 “ his birth, parentage, or any thing else. Not a
 “ line of what is called the New Testament is of
 “ his writing. The history of him is altogether the
 “ work of other people; and as to the account
 “ given of his resurrection and ascension, it was
 “ the necessary counterpart to the story of his
 “ birth. His historians having brought him into
 “ the world in a supernatural manner, were obliged
 “ to take him out again in the same manner, or
 “ the first part of the story must have fallen to the
 “ ground.”

To

To this argument against the resurrection of *Jesus*, various answers might be instituted : but I shall confine myself to one only, which appears to my mind incapable of confutation upon any principles of philosophy or experience ; and will indeed admit of no dispute, but upon positions, subversive of all historical testimony whatsoever, and introductory of universal scepticism.

The numerous circumstances interspersed through the *Gospel narratives* and in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, appertaining to the geography of countries, the positions of rivers, towns, and cities, public transactions of much notoriety in those days ; the dress, customs, manners, and languages of nations and individuals ; political characters of eminence and their conduct, with a vast multiplicity of detached occurrences and facts, not necessary to be specified at large, challenge (to speak with moderation) as large a portion of credibility to these books, considered in the light of *historical* testimonials, as can be claimed for any writings whatever, received as genuine, and equally ancient and multifarious. Now no mean presumption arises in favour of the most *extraordinary* transactions also, blended in the same texture of narrative by historians of so credible a character with respect to the rest of their relations ; but, when these *extraordi-*
nary

nary *facts* are found to have so intimate an incorporation with the *common* and unsuspicious occurrences of these histories so as to admit of no detachment, but to stand or fall with the main body of the compositions; I cannot see how any historical probability of the authenticity of these *extraordinary* events can rise higher than in such an instance. But it will be proper to unfold the purport of this reasoning, which admits abundant illustration, more explicitly, by a particular example.

The apostles, *Peter* and *John*, after the death of their Master, being summoned before the priests and elders of the *Jews**, boldly assert in their presence, that "God had raised Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom the *Jews* had crucified, from the dead." After some examination and debate, the two *apostles* are commanded by those magistrates and rulers of the *Jewish* nation to teach no more in the name of *Jesus*. But these intrepid followers of *Jesus* replied in precisely the words of *Socrates* to the *Athenians* †: "We ought to obey God rather than men: for we cannot but speak the things, which we have SEEN and HEARD." And what was their prospect and expectation from this determination to perseve-

* Acts iv. 7.—v. 27.

† In Apol. Platonis, p. 364. ed. Ludg. Acts v. 29.—iv. 20.

rance? Nothing less than ridicule, contempt, persecution, poverty, bodily chastisements, imprisonment and death :—

“ Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price.”

Now, if we recollect in union with all this, what indeed should never be forgotten, that these apostles, the first teachers of *christianity*, the *companions* and *friends* of *Jesus*, did not endure these accumulated inconveniencies from a mere obstinate attachment to *speculative* opinions, in which, in my opinion, they were fallible as other men ; but for asserting the palpable unquestionable evidence of their *external senses*, what “ they had *heard*, and *seen*, and *handled* * : no alternative of delusion or fallacy can be supposed ; but their case stands clearly distinguished from that of every *future* victim to religious persuasions : liable, as they were, to no misconstruction, no precipitate and prejudiced judgements, no conceivable imposture. The falsehoods therefore of *Christ's* resurrection in connection with this single fact, and all the train of collateral circumstances dependant from it, would, I am persuaded, upon any mathematical calculation of the sum of moral and historical presumption, amount to an improbability of the greatest

* John, i. 1. See also Remark xli. in my Evidences of Christianity.
mag-

magnitude, indefinitely approximating to a *miraculous event*.

“The resurrection and ascension, supposing them
 “to have taken place, admitted of public and o-
 “cular demonstration, like that of the ascension
 “of a balloon, or the sun at noon day, to all Je-
 “rusalem at least. A thing which every body
 “is required to believe, requires that the proof
 “and evidence of it should be equal to all, and
 “universal; and as the public visibility of this
 “last related act was the only evidence that could
 “give sanction to the former part, the whole of
 “it falls to the ground, because that evidence
 “never was given. Instead of this, a small num-
 “ber of persons, not more than eight or nine, are
 “introduced as proxies for the whole world, to
 “say, they *saw it*, and all the rest of the world are
 “called upon to believe it. But it appears that
 “Thomas did not believe the resurrection; and,
 “as they say, would not believe, without having
 “ocular and manual demonstration himself. So
 “*neither will I*; and the reason is equally as good
 “for me and for every other person, as for
 “Thomas.”

Farther, The demonstration of the *resurrection*
 may have been sufficiently public to demand our
 2 assent,

assent, in conjunction with such a variety of corroborating coincidences, though it were not attested by the ocular observation of all Jerusalem, which *Mr. Paine* supposes to be absolutely necessary to the establishment of this fact. The actual degree of publicity, however, attendant on this * transaction, according to the histories, may be learned from the texts referred to below †. Not a thousandth part of the people in *Great Britain* saw *Lunardi* go up from the *Artillery Ground* in a balloon; but the superior impulse to any possible action upon my mind, who saw him, in consequence of that event, does not exceed the impulse to a similar action on the mind of another, who did not see him, by an *evanescent infinitesimal* of efficacy. The man, therefore, who is resolved to believe no transaction, but upon "ocular and manual demonstration," belies his own theory in every movement of his life. I might advance also, in aid of these remarks, that mankind are most evidently placed here in a state of *probationary imperfection*; that, instead of *certainty* for our guide, we are compelled to trust, on most occasions, to degrees of *probability* infinitely diversified; and that some of our noblest and most refined excel-

† Matthew, xxviii. 9. Luke, xxiv. 13. John, xx. 19, 26.

1. Corinthians, xv. 5—9.

lencies, moral and intellectual, spring from a diffidence and docility and lowliness of understanding, which *disputable evidence* is best calculated to produce. Besides, that exercise and agitation of our mental powers, which is inevitably generated by the delays and difficulties, intervening propositions of this nature and the attainment of moral certainty, in a painful disquisition of them, contribute essentially to the clearness, and vigour, and general salubrity of the understanding: just as rivers are meliorated and refined by a winding passage over sand and gravel*. It might as well be pretended, that the faculties of man would be enlarged, and his condition improved, without the necessity of labour and ingenuity for the subsistence and well-being of common life: if the trees dropt honey into our mouths; if the land flowed with milk and nectar, as is fabled of the golden age†.

The
* *fontes liquidi, atque exercita cursu*

Flumina. Virg. Geo. iii. 529.

† *Ovid, metam. i. iii.*

Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris, ibant;

Flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice mella.

There is not more delightful poetry, than true philosophy in those lines of *Virgil, Geo. i. 121.*

———— pater ipse colendi

Haud facilem esse viam voluit; primusque per artem

Movit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda,

Nec torpere gravi passus sua regna veterno.

The

The declaration, therefore, of *Christ*, is no fanatical ejaculation, but a position strictly philosophical and intrinsically wise : “ Thomas, because
 “ thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed
 “ are they, that have *not seen*, and yet have be-
 “ lieved*.”

No considerate and inquisitive christian will pretend, that he sees the truth of his master's resurrection and the system supported by it, with the same intuition, which perceives the equality of the *three angles* of a *triangle* to one *right angle*. He is satisfied with thinking an acquiescence in this grand doctrine strictly rational and philosophical, if he descries it's indissoluble connection with other numerous occurrences of the highest probability ; if it forms a most important link in one concatenated series of divine communications, dignified and important in themselves, corroborated by contemporary histories, and ascertained almost to demonstration by the preceding and

The fire of Gods and men, with hard decrees,
 Forbids our plenty to be bought with ease ;
 And wills that mortal men inur'd to toil,
 Should exercise, with pains, the grudging soil.
 Himself invented first the shining share,
 And whetted human industry by care :
 Himself did handy-craft and arts ordain :
 Nor suffered sloth to rust his active reign.

DRYDEN.

* John, xx. 29.

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present

present existing circumstances of mankind at large : if, in short, nothing can be discovered in such a system, unfit for man to receive, or the Creator to bestow ; but, on the contrary, innumerable indications present themselves of that benevolence to the human race, which is to us the most convincing characteristic of the divinity.

“ It is vain to attempt to palliate or disguise
 “ this matter. The story, so far as relates to the
 “ supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and
 “ imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who
 “ were the authors of it is as impossible for us to
 “ know, as it is for us to be assured, that the books
 “ in which the account is related, were written by
 “ the persons whose names they bear. The best
 “ surviving evidence we now have respecting this
 “ affair is the Jews. They are regularly descended
 “ from the people who lived in the times this re-
 “ surrection and ascension is said to have happen-
 “ ed, and they say, *it is not true*. It has long
 “ appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite
 “ the Jews as a proof of the truth of the story. It
 “ is just the same as if a man were to say, I will
 “ prove the truth of what I have told you, by
 “ producing the people who say it is false.”

That the story of the resurrection “ has every
 “ mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the
 “ face

“ of it,” is the hardy assertion of one, who must be deemed to have nothing better to offer than *hardy assertion*, till he present us with a deduction of particulars in vindication of his confidence: and, if the books should *not* be written in reality by those identical persons, whose names are affixed, the truth of the facts themselves is deducible from a mass of collateral and independent evidence. And with respect to the incredulity of the *Jews*, many satisfactory reasons may be alledged. I have been assured indeed, and upon authority exceedingly respectable, that in the written annals of the *Israelitish* nation, repositied at *Venice* and *Amsterdam*, two miracles of *Jesus* stand recorded; one of which is the resuscitation of the widow’s son at *Nain**: but I would not wish this argument to pass for more than it’s proper value. It is, however, acknowledged by the *Jews*, that such a person as *Jesus* of *Nazareth* existed †, and at the time assigned by the *Evangelists*: but motives numerous and highly probable may be suggested for their rejection of him. The *Jewish* nation were expecting a magnificent leader and glorious conqueror, not an obscure *Nazarene* and humble teacher of religion: they were at that time, as appears from their countryman *Josephus*, and from the

† Luke, vii. ii. † See Bishop Lewth’s note on *Isaiah*, liii. 8.

Roman and *Evangelical* historians, a people exceedingly vicious and depraved: their leading men, with their chief priest and scribes, whose opinions and authority swayed the whole nation, according to the custom of corrupt communities, hated and reviled *Jesus*, not only for that simplicity and purity of life, which read a lecture of tacit reprobation to their ostentatious and immoral characters, but much more from his public and unreserved reproof of their ignorance, their tyranny, their selfishness, their extortion, and hypocrisy. Now, if it should be rejoined to these allegations, (and nothing else discoverable by me can be rejoined) that *miracles*, if *Jesus* really performed them, would not have failed to overpower their prejudices and animosity; I reply *first*; that the *Jews*, who admitted the possibility of working miracles by a confederacy with evil spirits, and a skill in magical operations *, would much more easily take refuge in that popular solution, than surrender their emoluments, their vices, and their religious professions, entwined as these were with great intellectual depravity; than offer up such costly sacrifices to the name and authority of a detested Censor. And, *secondly*, daily expe-

* This is manifest from *Josephus*, as well as various passages of the *New-Testament*.

rience presents us with innumerable instances of a perseverance in vice and folly, which, the unhappy victims of this tyranny are in their own minds fully assured, will as inevitably terminate in wretchedness and destruction, as if the evidence of such an issue were ascertained by a *miracle*.

But the subject before us admits of further illustration from the example of *Mr. Paine* himself. In this country, where his opposition to the corruptions of government has raised him so many adversaries, and such a swarm of unprincipled hirelings have exerted themselves in blackening his character and in misrepresenting all the transactions and incidents of his life; will it not be a most difficult, nay, an impossible task, for posterity, after a lapse of 1700 years, if such a wreck of modern literature, as that of the ancient, should intervene, to identify the real circumstances, moral and civil, of the man? And would a true historian, such as the *evangelists*, be credited at that future period against such a predominant incredulity, without large and weighty accessions of collateral attestation? And how transcendently extraordinary, I had almost said *miraculous*, will it be esteemed, by candid and reasonable minds, that a writer, whose object was, a melioration of condition to the common people, and their deliverance from oppression,

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poverty, and wretchedness, to the numberless blessings of upright and equal government, should be reviled, persecuted, and burned in effigy, with every circumstance of insult and execration, by these very objects of his benevolent intentions, in every corner of the kingdom?

Upon the whole, we find no difficulty in declaring, that what has astonished *Mr. Paine* so long, should astonish him no longer: as no species of reasoning is more common and more legitimate, than that which proves the truth of a circumstance from the evidence of corrupt and interested witnesses, who assert it to be false. The very denial of such a people as the *Jews* is no mean presumption in favour of the character of *Jesus*. Indeed, *Mr. Paine* pleads this cause with so much ability in our favour and against himself, that I should be unpardonable in withholding the next paragraph, replete with cogency and good sense, from the notice of the reader.

“That such a person as *Jesus Christ* existed, and that he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability. He preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man: but he preached also against the

“ cor-

“ corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests ;
 “ and this brought upon him the hatred and ven-
 “ geance of the whole order of the priest-hood.”

In the following pages, from p. 13 to p. 21, *Mr. Paine* enters into what he calls “ a bold investigation, and which, he apprehends, will alarm many.” Upon this topic of discussion our author fancies himself, no doubt, extremely eloquent; and, instead of plain sensible *Thomas Paine*, he commences a tumid and hypertragical declaimer. A most formidable and pompous representation is exhibited of the *devil* ; with a detail of the battles, the transformations, the imprisonment, and other strange adventures of his *Satanic* majesty. All this, I grant, may swell into a serious difficulty with good *churchmen* and puritanical fanatics, but to myself, and others of the same orthodox standard, occasion no embarrassment at all, being received with exactly the degree of credit vouchsafed them by *Thomas Paine* himself. The whole fable of the *Devil* and his angels, with all its terrific appendages, has been gratuitously fabricated by the sons of superstition from one or two emblematical passages in the *Revelations*, where the author has delineated future characters and events under the guise of these fictitious personages. No legitimate rules of interpretation, and no circumstances

of the *Jewish* or *Christian* systems, make it necessary for us to regard the *Devil*, or *Satan*, in any other light than that of an *allegorical character*. This mode of *personification* was perfectly suited to the taste of the *orientals*; who delighted in speaking, not only in striking metaphors, but by *actions*; and whose compositions are a tissue of figurative and emblematical expression. The origin of evil, moral and natural, is a problem, which has exercised the ingenuity of man, since the creation of the world; and the *Hebrews* relieved the distress of mind, resulting from these disquisitions, by personifying the *evil principle* under the denomination of *Satan*, or the *enemy*. The *Greeks* also had recourse to a similar contrivance for their satisfaction on this point; and employed *Ate*, the *Furies*, and other malignant deities, as convenient substitutes for the origin of evil*. Nor were similar fictions, with a view to the same embarrassment, unknown to the followers of *Confucius* and *Zoroaster*, to the natives of *Peru* and *Mexico*. But Mr. Paine's information upon the subject of modern theology must be very slender indeed, or he would have known, that those, who have distinguished themselves of late years by the freedom of scriptural research, unfettered by the chicanery and bribery

* See Homer's *Iliad*, xix. 87, 91.

of establishments, have exploded these monstrous doctrines, which receive no real countenance from the genius of the *Christian* covenant, or the sense of scripture; and will soon have no existence but in the creeds of *Dames* and *Nurses*. Alas! our *Deist* fancied himself in stout combat with genuine *Christianity*, whilst he was buffeting a mere phantom of ignorance and superstition! So easy is declamation against folly!

“ These books, beginning with *Genesis* and
 “ ending with *Revelations* (which by the bye is a
 “ book of riddles that requires a *Revelation* to
 “ explain it) are, we are told, the word of God.”

The vindicator, who occupies himself in the confutation of such unsupported and dogmatical assertions, is not much more excusable, than the *ignoramus*, who has the audacity to produce them. I thus express myself with unreserved censure, upon a probability of the highest kind, that *Mr. Paine* never studied the *apocalypse* with an express view of deciding upon the authenticity of that singular composition. When he has done this, and is able to invalidate merely those incontrovertible *internal* symptoms of genuineness, which the synchronisms, the curious coincidences and arrangement of the parts, detected and elucidated with

such incomparable skill and clearness by *Joseph Mede*, carry with them to every dispassionate examiner, it will then be proper and seasonable to discuss the allegations of our deist. But that the random fiction of a distempered brain should be marked with such characters of truth, as are found on the face of the *apocalypse*, is to me perfectly inconceivable.

“ When the church mythologists established
 “ their system, they collected all the writings they
 “ could find, and managed them as they pleased.
 “ It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us
 “ whether such of the writings as now appear,
 “ under the name of the Old and the New Testa-
 “ ment, are in the same state in which those col-
 “ lectors say they found them ; or whether they
 “ added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

“ Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which
 “ of the books out of the collection they had
 “ made, should be the WORD OF GOD, and which
 “ should not. They rejected several ; they voted
 “ others to be doubtful, such as the books called
 “ the Apocrypha ; and those books which had a
 “ majority of votes, were voted to be the word of
 “ God. Had they voted otherwise, all the peo-
 “ ple, since calling themselves Christians, had be-
 “ lieved

“ lieved otherwise ; for the belief of the one
 “ comes from the vote of the other. Who the
 “ people were that did all this, we know nothing
 “ of ; they called themselves by the general name
 “ of the church ; and this is all we know of the
 “ matter.”

In answer to this undigested and inaccurate statement of the case, I observe, as follows : It is most certain, and ought not to be dissembled, that *all* the books of the *Old* and *New Testaments* have not come confirmed to us by the same degree of evidence. They may be properly distributed into two classes, Books of *Fact*, and Books of *Opinion*. Under the former class I would comprise from *Genesis* to the book of *Job*, with the *Gospels* and *Acts* of the *Apostles* ; and under the latter, to make the largest concession to this argument, the *Hagiographa* and *Prophets*, i. e. all the remainder of the *Old Testament*, with the *Epistles* and *Apocalypse* of the *New*. Now, that we may waive all discussion of the evidences and importance of the latter collection, the *Christian* and *Jewish* systems need no support beyond the authenticity of the *historic* class : and I assert in the fullest confidence, and appeal to a multitude of publications in behalf of this assertion, that no history whatever, taking it's antiquity into consideration, has more claims to be
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received as genuine, than the histories in question. And what need of circumstantial detail in repelling the objections of men, who really know just nothing of the subject, and satisfy their *reason* and *philosophy* by peremptory asseveration only, unilluminated by one single ray of information on the topic in dispute *? To contravene positions, that have been discussed again and again by writers of the first genius and erudition, and to disparage the genuineness of the *bible histories* wholly and indiscriminately, without some precision of investigation, some specific allegations, founded on the report of authentic documents, is intolerable arrogance, and the consummation of literary profligacy. With respect to the *internal* evidences of these *histories*, I am persuaded, and would engage to prove in detail, that they are exceedingly superior to those of any ancient records whatever, whose authenticity is admitted; evidences, of which no man will doubt, who does not insist, on *mathematical demonstration* in cases only susceptible of varying *probabilities*. However this be, it is my settled persuasion, deduced from experience and the manners of mankind, that, if no *written memorials* of the *Jewish* and *Christian* dispensations were at this moment in

* I have long had in contemplation a work relative to the authenticity of the *Old Testament*, similar to my *Evidences of Christianity*; which I hope some day to execute.

existence, the present condition of the professors of these systems, as a traduction of believers in a certain system, composing vast aggregates of men through a succession of ages, in a variety of instances persecuted, distressed, and destroyed for their belief, cannot be accounted for, but on a supposition of the original reasonableness of these dispensations, in the apprehensions of the *first* professors; and consequently of their probable authenticity: unless indeed we are resolved to exempt the men of those æras from the common benefits of rationality. It were most easy to enlarge on this subject; but more has been said already, than such desultory and unsubstantiated allegations have any reason to expect: and I shall only add, from a multiplicity of cogent instances, with reference to *one* branch of evidence of the first moment, that a comparison of the xxviii. chapter of *Deuteronomy* only, with the subsequent and present state of the *Israelitish* nation, must flash conviction, I should think, upon any mind, not totally prejudiced and perverted, in favour of the *prophetical* pretensions of the *Scriptures*: for that the book of *Deuteronomy* was composed *posterior* to these events, what effrontery even of unlearned *deism*, if it hazard the assertion, will undertake to prove?

“ Revelation is a communication of something,
 “ which the person, to whom that thing is revealed,
 “ did

“ did not know before. For if I have done a
 “ thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to
 “ tell me I have done it, or seen it, nor to enable
 “ me to tell it, or to write it.”

This is not only the *essence*, but the *quintessence*, of all weakness and absurdity : and affords a melancholy instance, how men of real genius and abilities must expose themselves, when they venture to discuss subjects of the highest moment, for which they are qualified neither by reading nor reflexion. Such presumption is no other than the case, simply but pointedly described by the apostle : “ Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools*.” Mr. Paine has given us a notable definition truly ; in which the term to be explained constitutes a part ! But, to pass by this stupidity ; how sayest thou, child of reason ? “ Revelation is a communication of something unknown before.” So then, not only the professors of philosophy at the higher places of education, but every dame, that teaches the *horn-book* in a country village, communicates, it seems, a *revelation* ! And the man, who so defines and so conceives, and, upon the strength of such definition and conception, talks *about it and about it* with all the fullness of self-sufficiency, is able, it should seem, to demolish *Judaism*

* Romans, i. 22.

and *Christianity* with a few dashes of *his* pen, and to establish mere deism on their ruins!

“ How would our fathers rise up in a rage;

“ And swear all shame is lost in *George's* age !”

What our redoubtable antagonist immediately subjoins, favours of equal imbecillity, and total misapprehension of the subject under contemplation. The greater part of the *bible-history* contains simply a narrative of the *political* occurrences of the *Jews*; and the transactions recorded are, therefore, in a variety of instances to be considered in the same light with those of all other histories; namely, as aggravated and disguised in a thousand instances by passing through the medium of national partiality. The history of *Sampson* is, on this account, to be credited in proportion only to that degree of probability, measured by the common experience of mankind and the state of the world in those days, which the history itself shall claim in the estimation of reasonable judges; under such qualifications and deductions, as will by no means invalidate the main body and the leading facts of the narrative in the light of a national register of persons and events.

I agree with *Thomas Paine*, that “the account
“ of the creation, with which the book of Genesis

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“ opens,

“ opens, has all the appearance of being a tradi-
 “ tion, which the Israelites had among them be-
 “ fore they came into Egypt ; and after their de-
 “ parture from that country, they put it at the
 “ head of their history, without telling, as it is most
 “ probable that they did not know, how they came
 “ by it.”

But what majesty of sentiment, what a dignified simplicity of expression, characterises the *Mosaic* account of the creation of the world ! Compare only this elegant and compendious relation with the strange, confused, and despicable *cosmogonies* of the *Greeks* : for it is manifest from internal evidence, that *Ovid's* beautiful description was constructed upon the *Mosaic* narrative : nor, otherwise, is it probable, that the literary *Romans* of the *Augustan* age should be strangers to the *Greek* translation of the *Old Testament* *.

To all that occurs between pages 23 and 31, as far as they comprehend any objections to the *Jewish* institution, a very satisfactory answer has, if I mistake not, been already given. One pre-

* *Fuscus Aristius*, to whom *Horace* addresses the 22d Ode of the first Book, and his tenth Epistle, one of the most intimate and beloved friends of the Poet, was either a native *Jew*, or a *profelyte* : compare Sat. i. 9. 60,—72.

dominant

dominant error in page 24, it may not be unseasonable to detect. *Mr. Paine* there asserts :

“ Why it has been called the Mosaic account
“ of the creation, I am at a loss to conceive. Mo-
“ ses, I believe, was too good a judge of such sub-
“ jects to put his name to that account. He had
“ been educated among the Egyptians, who were a
“ people as well skilled in science, and particularly
“ in astronomy, as any people of their day.”

All this may be literally true ; but a palpable *untruth* is implied in it ; that the *Ægyptians* were really a learned and scientific people : whereas their science and their astronomy was just nothing at all. If not, produce me your vouchers to this fact, from existing monuments or ancient testimony*. Political society was undoubtedly existing in much stability and regularity at a very early period in *Ægypt* ; but probably not earlier than in *China* and *Indostan*, or, perhaps, other pleasant and fertile countries of the *East* ; but where shall we find the scientific discoveries of all, or any of these people, at the *Mosaic* æra ? The only circumstance, which has fallen to my knowledge, that is favourable to the science of the *Ægyptians*, but in much later ages,

* See a posthumous dissertation by *Dr. Woodward* in the *Archæologia* of the Society of Antiquaries, vol. iv. dissert. 19.

is that eagernefs, with which the *Grecian* sages travelled for information to this country. But the *Ægyptian* priests, like priests of other ages, cajoled mankind with juggling tricks, mysterious mythologies, lying legends of gods and heroes, and an imaginary chronology dependant on pretended observations of *eclipses*; and, I apprehend, the acquisitions of the Greeks from this peregrination, were no more than the general acquisitions of modern travellers, and those of *Ulysses* in ancient times; who, as we learn from *Pope's* translation of the *Odossey*,

“ Wandering from clime to clime, observant stray'd,

“ Their manners noted, and their states survey'd.”

The few elementary propositions in *geometry*, which are ascribed to *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, ought not to be imputed, in all probability, to any communications from the *Ægyptians*; but were the pure inventions of those most acute and god-like philosophers. Yes; such men, as *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, would either have learned more, or have learned nothing, from the *Ægyptians*. Not a day passes however, but authors are trumpeting the *science* of the *Ægyptians* upon all occasions; a science, which has no existence but in the misconceptions of their own brain, and the creeds of their teachers.

teachers. And these *deists* after all laugh at *Christians*, forsooth ! for their credulity.

“ If we permit ourselves to conceive right
 “ ideas of things, we must necessarily affix the
 “ idea, not only of unchangeableness, but of the
 “ utter impossibility of any change taking place,
 “ by any means or accident whatever, in that
 “ which we would honour with the name of the
 “ word of God ; and therefore the word of God
 “ cannot exist in any written or human language.

What can be more frivolous, and more unworthy of a man of sense ? A revelation, we suppose, is first conveyed to a particular person ; he proposes it with the proofs of his mission to others ; they transmit the same by tradition and written records to their posterity. It is acknowledged, that no succeeding evidence to future generations can strictly authorize that most indubitable conviction of the first immediate professor ; but even *their* evidence may approximate to certainty beyond any assignable limits, so as to amount to a species of persuasion, from a concurrence of corroborating particulars, which is morally irresistible. Who, even at this day, can be assured, that *Michael Angelo* planned the fabric of *St. Peter's* at *Rome*, or *Sir Christopher Wren*, *St. Paul's*
 in

in *London*, with a satisfaction equal to that of the contemporaries of these transactions? And yet, what man in his senses entertains the least doubt of these respective facts? And so it *may be* with respect to the *Jewish* and *Christian* revelations; and so it *is*, notwithstanding any arguments of *Mr. Paine*. A few mistakes of copyists and printers make no more alteration in the *general* effect of this argument, than a new stone, or pinnacle repaired, will be deemed to abolish the pretensions of the primary architect to his structure.

“ I now go on to the book called the New
 “ Testament. The *new* Testament! that is, the
 “ *new* Will, as if there could be two wills of the
 “ Creator.”

Scarcely a single *Christian* can be found, I believe, so totally ignorant and untutored, as not to know, that the *New Covenant* is the proper title of this book. Most completely ridiculous then does *Mr. Paine* make himself by his serious contest with vulgar and exploded errors. A plain demonstration this, how little of what is new and important *he* has to bring forward on these long agitated disquisitions.

From

From p. 33 to 36, not an *iota* of remark is to be discovered, that does not disgrace the meanest understanding: and no objection, that a school-boy could not confute. My countrymen must be degenerated into a *swinish multitude* indeed, to find any nutriment in such a mess of pigs-meat, as these wretched caterers *David Andrews* and *Thomas Paine* have provided for them. But what better can be expected from *zeal* without *knowledge*? Nothing indeed, but dogmatism, misrepresentation, nonsense, and obscurity. In short, to employ our author's own words in p. 38. " I become so tired with examining into the inconsistencies and absurdities of *Thomas Paine's* effusion, that I hasten to the conclusion of it, in order to proceed," but on very unpromising speculation of success, " to something better."

It is most true, as our author asserts in p. 40, " The church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty:" yet, according to the stale but just maxim, whose dictates *Mr. Paine* has so incessantly and egregiously violated in this crude production; "*ab abusu ad usum non valet consequentia*:"

"*quentia*:" these *corruptions* are not chargeable on the spirit of *true christianity*: the argument will not infer from *perverted revelation* to *no revelation* at all. No: there are, we trust, such things in being, as *truth*, *philosophy*, and *revealed religion*, in spite of *lying Chroniclers*, *imaginary system-mongers*, and *meretricious theologians*.

Your notion of *redemption*, upon which you so largely expatiate and so tragically declaim in the following pages, is the notion derived probably from your *quaker* father and the good fraternity, among whom you received your education: but is not the notion of the scriptures. Our doctrine is, that God created man pure and upright, with a capacity of conforming himself in all respects to the injunctions of the divine will*: that life without cessation was the proposed reward of unfailing obedience; and death the punishment of transgression. Man deviated from the line of rectitude, by listening to the seductions of wayward appetite; and became justly exposed to the penalty denounced against sin. His heavenly father, who in the midst of judgement remembers mercy, and

* So *Solomon*. "Lo! this only have I found; that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventors." *Ecclesiastes*, vii. 29.

delights, through the whole conduct of his providential administrations to mankind, in educating good from evil, renews his covenant with his fallen creatures ; promises to reverse this sentence of death, and to re-establish him in his claim to immortality by means of another dispensation at a future season, which appeared to divine wisdom the best calculated for it's promulgation. Accordingly, in the fulness of time, after a preparatory system, whose chief object was the establishment of a belief in one God, in opposition to the corruptions of idol-worship ; *Jesus of Nazareth* was commissioned to preach in *Judea* the terms of acceptance with the Almighty. These were, a belief and practice of the doctrines, which this apostle preached, and confirmed by miracles : the doctrines of unbounded mercy on the part of God upon repentance and reformation, and of universal undistinguishing benevolence on the part of man to all his brethren of the human race : principles essential in themselves to the virtue and happiness of mankind ; and therefore required as the conditions of divine favour, by this system of revelation. Thus was the inestimable privilege of immortality again indulged to the world ; and *Jesus* himself was propounded as the *voucher* of this truth. Hence manifestly appears the rea-

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son,

son, why, he did not "die of a fever, or of the "small-pox, of old age*," or in any private customary manner; but by a public exhibition of death upon a cross: that he, whose resurrection had been previously appointed by himself for the test and demonstration of the whole *christian system* as it related to the destruction of death and the gift of immortality, might be shown to the world unequivocally and indubitably *dead* †. This may be regarded as a brief abstract of the *evangelical* scheme of redemption according to my conception of it; a scheme, which admits of abundant illustration and establishment from a multiplicity of considerations, conformable alike to reason, philosophy, and experience: but neither does the present occasion permit, nor the weight of *Mr. Paine's* objections require, a more copious display or a more scrupulous corroboration of our creed.

In page 46, you say, "Jesus Christ could speak "but one language, which was Hebrew," with as much confidence, as if you had been personally ac-

* Page 36, of *Mr. Paine's* Pamphlet.

† See Remark, xliii. in my evidences of *Christianity*. Had *Jesus* died in any of the ways pointed out by the wisdom of *Mr. Paine*, we should have been called upon to clear the suspicions of collusion and imposture from the privacy of that event.

quainted

quainted with him. Now my opinion is, that the inhabitants of *Judea*, and the greater part of the *Roman* empire, understood *Greek* also as well and generally as the *Irish* understand *English*: but what claim have those, who decide without knowledge, to any satisfaction on this point? My wish is to excite in the deistical lovers of truth a desire to examine for themselves; a sober estimate of their own acquirements; and a modest persuasion, that the disciples of *Christ* may have *some* reasons, not wholly puerile and inefficient, for their attachment to their religion: and I recommend, in the mean time, to the consideration of the *atheist* (if such men really exist; which I doubt exceedingly) what *Mr. Paine* advances in the 48th and following pages, and at the conclusion of his pamphlet. I know not, whether *Mr. Paine's* remarks on the languages of the ancients * can be thought worthy of any animadversion as we pass. I observe, however, that as all men have not that docility and humility of mind, which is essential to an acceptance of *Christianity*, but wrap themselves up in a cloak of ignorance and self-sufficiency; so neither have all that sensibility of perception, and that elegance of taste, which is necessary to a relish of the inimitable beauties of ancient composition. I may be, for example, a delicate bird, delighting in strawberries and

* Page 65, and the following.

the choicest fruits : *Thomas Paine*, a crow ; who prefers a feast on carrion and putrescence. The genius and faculties of men are diversified with infinite shades of texture : and it seems to be the duty of every individual to prosecute that branch of literature, with peculiar devotion, for which nature has peculiarly fitted him. Poetical inspiration and the powers of eloquence were not given by God without some wise intention, with respect both to the possessor and mankind at large.

Nec tua laudabis studia aut aliena reprendes :

is a sensible and valuable maxim of an *Augustan* poet. The compositions of the *Greeks* and *Romans* stand as yet unrivalled in the universe ; and their admirers are much confirmed in their attachment, when they perceive their censurers to be those, who know little, or nothing, of the subject themselves, and scruple not to incur an imputation of most contemptible impertinence for so irrational an interposition of their judgement. Besides, I have not yet discovered, that the best philologists are generally inferior in any *other* branch of knowledge to the wise-acres, who undervalue these attainments, merely because they have not the means of acquisition. Have the cultivators of the languages more natural powers therefore than other men ? By no means : but their youth

has been happily exercised in those pursuits, in which youth can only be occupied, very generally speaking, with complete efficiency. In all that *Mr. Paine* has said on this subject, I discern little more than a collection of ignorance, misconception, effrontery, and insipidity.

“ The event that served more than any other,
 “ to break the first link in this long chain of def-
 “ potic ignorance, is that known by the name of
 “ the reformation by Luther. From that time,
 “ though it does not appear to have made any
 “ part of the intention of Luther, or of those who
 “ are called reformers, the Sciences began to re-
 “ vive, and Liberty, their natural associate, be-
 “ gan to appear.”

The reformation arose from an insight into the corruptions and absurdities of Popery, in consequence of a freedom of enquiry already commencing, and a steady conviction of servility, disgraceful to a rational being, in a submission of the understanding to the arbitrary dictates of a spiritual usurper. The reformation, therefore, by *Luther* was only one circumstance in the recovery of the natural right of man, to think and determine for himself. But the benefits of the reformation were momentous and extensive ; and particularly by

by removing those apprehensions of personal danger, which debarred all progress to true philosophy in countries, where the *Papal* domination was established. And surely it forms no mean presumption in favour of the reasonableness of revelation, that the restoration of science and the rectification of religion should be congenial and contemporary ; that the beams of knowledge should dispel the damps and darkness of ignorant superstition, but contribute illumination and vigour to the sincere gospel of *Jesus Christ*. The most distinguished mathematicians and philosophers of our own country, *Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Barrow, and Hartley*, have been the firmest believers of the *Christian* revelation : and not passive educational believers merely, accepting with implicit acquiescence the traditionary creeds of their teachers ; but strenuous assertors and most able vindicators of the authority, the importance, and the rationality of the *gospel*. I would recommend to the notice of *Thomas Paine* the following passage in the life of *Emlyn** : “ *Dr. Halley*, said *Sir Isaac Newton*, “ I am always glad to hear you, when you speak “ about *astronomy*, or other parts of *mathematics* ; “ because that is a subject you have studied, and “ well understand : but you should not talk of “ *Christianity* ; for you have not studied it. I

* See my Evidences, Remark xxxix.

“ have ;

“ have ; and know you know nothing o. the
 “ matter.”

Mr. Paine descants with a tolerable share of merriment, in page 109, on the story of *Jonah* and the *Whale* ; which my own stomach also feels an equal indisposition to ingurgitate. It is not unlike a tale, that I lately heard ; which many will think not inferior to that before us in symptoms of credibility. A little black-boy, a favourite with the ship's company, as he was carelessly sitting with his bread and cheese, suddenly fell overboard ; and was instantly swallowed by an immense shark. Some sailors, witnesses of this catastrophe, exclaimed : “ *Cæsar* is devoured by a shark.” The captain immediately commanded a hook to be baited with a huge piece of beef ; which the monster seized at once with the utmost rapacity. He was drawn with difficulty upon deck ; his tail cut off to prevent mischief ; and the most trembling precaution used in opening his stomach for fear of wounding it's inestimable contents. But how great was their admiration and delight to discover little *Cæsar*, perched on a tubercle of the purtenance, dispatching his bread and cheese in perfect composure and security !

I have now finished my remarks on this pamphlet of *Thomas Paine* ; which have been extended
 thus

thus far, more in deference to the deserved celebrity of the name, than the powers of the disputant : nor am I conscious to myself of eluding any difficulty, or shrinking from the terrors of a single argument, in the course of this examination. To the best of my ability, a concise answer to every objection, not completely puerile, has been specifically given, or is virtually included in this series of observations. Nor, in conclusion, will I dissemble one of my most urgent inducements to this publication to have been, an ambition to declare to my fellow-citizens in the most unreserved manner, that one in the midst of a general obloquy on reformers, as infidels and atheists, is indeed a zealous advocate for *Christianity* ; but, as becomes the disciple of a *lowly* and pacific master, with as warm an enthusiasm for the universal equality and the unalienable rights of man, as ever actuated the breast even of the "hallowed MILTON." The more perilous the times, with the more animation will a genuine votary of a crucified Saviour, who "looks for a better country, that is, a heavenly*," feel himself impelled to a bold and open profession of the practical principles of his religion ; the principles of LOVE and PEACE and LIBERTY, without distinction, to the whole human race.

* Hebrews, xi. 16.

This

This is the profession of our faith before atheists and unbelievers; before ministers and kings: from this profession, neither shall shame seduce, nor danger terrify. It shall be our guide through life, our support in death, and, we trust, our recompense for ever!

I implore, finally, the omnipotent controller of events, who "ruleth in the kingdom of men" and giveth it to whomsoever he will *, to consider his creature man in this most momentous crisis of our affairs! to stem that torrent of human blood, which is deluging the earth, at the will of *Christian* kings, beyond all example in the most ferocious ages of heathenism and barbarity! to confound the devices of all sanguinary destroyers of mankind, combined against liberty and knowledge; the true "synagogues of Satan †" and to turn their hearts! to annihilate every sentiment of national hostility in every breast; that the horrid circumstances of war and slaughter may no where exist, but in the bloody page of history, as awful memorials of savage unregenerated man! to regard the sorrows of the distressed *African*; and to compensate with ages of consolation "the

* Daniel, iv. 32. † Revelations, ii. 9.

“ years, in which he has seen adversity *!” to confirm and comfort the glorious martyrs of truth, humanity, and freedom, whether in bonds or exile ; to multiply the number of their followers, that rising generations may call them blessed ! to overpower the delusive flame of infatuated superstition, engendered in the putrid sink of priestcraft, tyranny, and persecution, by the predominant radiance of the son of righteousness, the pure and undefiled religion of *Jesus Christ* ! to consolidate all flesh with the cement of evangelical fraternity † and benevolence ! to harmonize all hearts with the sympathetic influences of “ unity, peace, and concord !”

* Psalm, xc. 15. † Matthew, xii. 50. xxiii. 8.

HACKNEY, May 8, 1794.



THE END.

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